million capital campaign for physical renovations. Peter Zorzi of Studio One Architects, of our South End parish neighborhood, said, ''I can't count how many Sundays I sat at 8:30 Mass imaging what I would do to restore this church!'' With well-established competence and experience, Studio One brought us an enduring enthusiasm and a church of renewed beauty. Our gratitude for their services is beyond measure.

We installed the Verdin Singing Tower Carillon from nearby St. Joseph Church which closed. Its seasonal hymns resound throughout the South End three times daily. All pews were removed for restoration and resizing. Artists Salvatore Degli Atti and Salvatore Rossi of Italy achieved the acclaimed renovations. From St. Polycarp Church in Somerville, which closed, we purchased marble altars and other appointments. Architects redesigned the sanctuary space, completing handicap accessibility.

Fifty travelers journeyed to Italy in honor of the Centennial. The Communications Committee reached out to our most senior members, inviting those 80 years of age and older to submit memories and photos for the Anniversary Book. 101 responded.

A Mass of Thanksgiving for the Centennial was celebrated in the renewed church on June 10, 2007. Principal Celebrant and Homilist was Most Reverend Timothy A. McDonnell, Bishop of Springfield. A dinner for 700 followed at the Castle of Knights in Chicopee.

Since the 1907 South End origin of the parish, Interstate highway configuration has dispersed members to many surrounding cities and towns. Blessed with their heritage of Catholic faith, a festive Italo-American spirit, and strong and extended family, Mt. Carmel parishioners remain a vibrant and proud witness to their heritage and faith in Springfield's South End.

2007 FARM BILL

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 6, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, the 2007 farm bill is one of the most important pieces of legislation this House will consider this year. From such varied topics as rural development to nutrition to conservation to energy to research to disaster assistance, the farm bill will impact all of these issues and many, many more. In my district, Missouri's sixth, we have a lot of farmers diversified in different row crops and livestock. Many of my fellow farmers in Northwest Missouri are soybean producers, so it is with this in mind that I would like to draw this distinguished body's attention to a letter I have recently received from the United Soybean Board, an organization responsible for administering the soybean research and promotion programs of the soybean checkoff program. We've heard a lot about checkoff programs over the years, and I hope my colleagues will find the following correspondence useful as we move forward with the 2007 farm bill.

MAY 24, 2007.

Hon. SAM GRAVES,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE GRAVES: Thank you for your letter of May 10, 2007, regarding the soybean research and promotion efforts of the soybean checkoff program. I very much welcome the opportunity now and in the future to provide you, other members of Congress, and the soybean farmers of Missouri's Sixth District and in other parts of our country, information about our soybean checkoff.

As you know, at the urging of the nation's soybean farmers, Congress created the Soybean Promotion, Research and Consumer Information Act in 1990. Since that time, the United Soybean Board (USB), of which I serve as Chairman, and 29 Qualified State Soybean Boards (QSSBs), have invested soybean checkoff funds to provide profit opportunities for all U.S. soybean farmers.

Keeping in mind your suggestion for brevity, I am pleased to provide answers to the specific questions you posed in your letter about the accomplishments of the soybean checkoff:

1. Recently, biodiesel seems to receive a lot of news coverage. What role, if any, has the checkoff, national or state, played in the development or marketing of this product and what is the relationship of USB to the National Biodiesel Board?

Simply put, America's soybean farmers, through our soybean checkoff, established the biodiesel industry in the United States. The Missouri Soybean Merchandising Council (MSMC), a Qualified State Soybean Board (QSSB), funded the first significant biodiesel research back in 1990. The USB, MSMC and other QSSBs helped establish the National Biodiesel Board (NBB) in 1992. The soybean checkoff continues to fund most of the NBB-coordinated research and promotion that has made biodiesel one of the fastest-growing renewable fuels in the United States. According to NBB, biodiesel production in the U.S. has increased from an estimated 500,000 gallons in 1999 to 225 million gallons in 2006. Our biannual soybean farmer attitudes survey showed only 23 percent of all soybean farmers used biodiesel in 2002. Our latest survey shows more than 50 percent of all U.S. soybean farmers now use biodiesel in their operations.

2. I know that export markets for American agricultural products are very important to our nation's trade balance. How involved have USB or the QSSBs been, if at all, in developing these markets?

Since Congress established the national soybean checkoff program in 1990, U.S. soybean exports have doubled. U.S. Department of Agriculture figures show we exported 557 million bushels of U.S. soybeans in 1990. Last year, we exported a record 1.1 billion bushels of U.S. soybeans.

The growth of U.S. soy exports to China serves as an example of the kind of export development work accomplished by the soybean checkoff. State soybean checkoff programs funded the early reverse marketing activities in China to change the country from an exporter into an importer of soy. Shortly after Congress created the national soybean checkoff, USB also contributed to those efforts, such as providing technical information and support to China's poultry, livestock and aquaculture industries on how to use soy as a valuable protein source in animal feed. In 1995, these efforts, funded with soybean checkoff dollars and market development funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service, helped turn China from being a soy competitor into a U.S. soy customer. China is now the biggest export customer of U.S. soy. Most recently, working with soybean checkoff farmer-leaders and staff, a group of Chinese buyers signed contracts in the United States to purchase 211 million bushels of U.S. soybeans, worth more than $2 billion. USDA projects when the marketing year ends later this year, China will buy over 400 million bushels of U.S. soy. In addition to building markets for U.S. soy in China, the soybean checkoff funds U.S. soy market development efforts in 80 countries around the world.

3. As a nation, we are becoming increasingly health conscious, and I know that soy is regarded as having positive health benefits. What has the checkoff program done to help document these health benefits if at all? In addition, we are all aware of the issue of trans fats in the foods we eat. Is this an issue for soybeans and if so, what has been done to address it?

The soybean checkoff has been instrumental in funding the necessary research to document the health benefits of soy. Early on, state and national soybean checkoff organizations funded the scientific research that helped lead to the U.S. Food & Drug Administration's health claim in 1998 linking the benefits of soy to reducing the risk of heart disease. Also, USB's Soy Health Research Program has invested about $500,000 to assist scientists in submitting soy-related research grant applications, which has helped secure more than $12 million in research funds from the National Institutes of Health. This 24–1 return on soy research investments seeks to document how soy's role in a healthy diet can reduce the risk of such diseases as breast cancer, prostate cancer and osteoporosis.

Second, in the late 1990s, USB identified trans fat as an issue that could have a major impact on the future utilization of soybean oil. The checkoff established an initiative to determine food industry trends and needs, which eventually led to the creation of QUALISOY in 2004. This collaborative U.S. soybean industry-wide effort helped accelerate the development of new soybean varieties with oil that requires little or no hydrogenation and, therefore, is free of trans fats and ultimately lower in saturated fats. This year, U.S. soybean farmers are expected to plant up to 1.75 million acres of these new varieties, which also provide additional profit opportunities to U.S. soybean farmers.

4. We are also aware of the threat of Asian Soybean Rust to the American soybean farmer. I am pleased that USDA so quickly responded with specific programs to counter this threat. How, if at all, were checkoff funds used to assist this effort? How else, if at all, have either state or national checkoff funds been used to benefit soybean production, either by increasing yields or dealing with pests?

Similar to our efforts to increase soybean exports, the challenge to minimize the impact of Asian Soybean Rust provides a good example of how checkoff investments made by soybean farmers can be leveraged with federal government dollars to benefit us—and ultimately all consumers—with a safe, abundant supply of soy. Beginning in 2005, the soybean checkoff helped coordinate and fund an early-warning system for soybean rust through a cooperative effort with USDA. The system includes an extensive series of sentinel plots planted to soybeans that receive regular monitoring for rust and other plant pests and diseases. This system keeps us well informed about the spread of rust and helps us scout, monitor and manage our crops to prevent or minimize yield loss from this potentially devastating disease.

More broadly, finding solutions to soybean yield-robbing pests and diseases traditionally has ranked as USB's second largest investment area. For example, in 2001, USB-funded researchers published breakthrough research identifying specific genes in the Soybean Cyst Nematode (SCN), the leading cause of soybean yield loss from plant diseases. This helped serve as basis for more durable SCN resistance in soybean varieties. Just last year, researchers funded by the soybean checkoff published genetic markers for two rust-resistant genes. This allows soybean breeders to incorporate these genes into

breeding programs without laborious testing against the harmful disease. We expect this to lead to new rust-resistant varieties in the next four to five years. These are just a few examples of how the soybean checkoff has helped me and other U.S. soybean farmers prevent or reduce soybean yield loss from harmful plant pests and diseases. No doubt, these efforts have helped U.S. soybean production grow from 1.98 billion bushels in 1991 to a record 3.18 billion bushels in 2006.

5. I know that soy products have been featured in the federal government's bioproducts support program. Are you aware of what soy products have been featured in this effort and if so, could you elaborate on how, if at all, national or state checkoff funds have been utilized to develop any of these products?

This is an area of special interest to me since I served three terms as chair of USB's New Uses program and one year as team lead of our Biobased Products Initiative. Our surveys show U.S. soybean farmers believe developing new soy uses, such as soy-based inks, plastics, lubricants, adhesives and solvents, should be a top priority of our checkoff. The most notable new industrial uses for soy developed by the soybean checkoff include soy biodiesel and soy ink. But hundreds of soy-based products, many developed with the help of soybean checkoff-funded research, now also fill our ever-growing Soy Products Guide, a catalog of soy-based bioproducts we publish annually. Recognizing the purchasing power of the federal government, the soybean checkoff has taken the lead in familiarizing federal purchasing officials with the availability and benefits of these products through workshops held in the nation's capital. Last year, USDA finalized its list of the first six categories of biobased items that would be awarded purchasing preference under the federal bioproducts support program. USB has funded research and marketing efforts with companies that make up three of the six categories, which include soy-based mobile hydraulic fluids, roof coatings and penetrating lubricants. Late last year, USDA proposed that more items be designated for preferred federal purchasing. When finalized, we anticipate that more soy-based bioproducts developed with the help of the soybean checkoff, such as spray foam insulation, carpet backing, electric transformer fluids, engine oils, cleaners and other solvents, will receive preferred purchasing designation.

6. The Soybean Promotion, Research and Consumer Information Act, as passed in 1990, called for regular ROI studies to evaluate the return to soybean farmers on their investment in the checkoff. Have those studies been undertaken, and if so, what were the results? If these studies do not reflect the additional funds that may have been leveraged through the use of checkoff funds, please expand on that point as well. In this same context, what evidence, if any, do you have that soybean farmers continue to support the checkoff?

Evaluation remains a cornerstone of every soybean checkoff-funded program. All USB-funded programs must have an evaluation component. As required by law, the soybean checkoff has also conducted regular return-on-investment (ROI) studies. An independent study, conducted in 1998 by Texas A&M, found that for every checkoff dollar invested, U.S. soybean farmers earned an additional eight dollars in net revenue. A similar study, conducted in 2003 by World Perspectives and AgriLogic, found a 6:1 ROI. USB's next regular ROI study will be conducted next year.

In addition to those noted above, numerous examples exist of how we maximize checkoff investments by achieving outside, matching funds to benefit all U.S. soybean farmers. For example, state and national soybean checkoff international marketing investments, which this year total $11.3 million, achieved a matching investment of $14.2 million in Foreign Market Development and Market Access Program funds through USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service. USB funding of the development of the soybean genome map and development of genetic markers helped lead to a nearly $5 million dollar grant for soybean genomics research conducted by the National Science Foundation. Soybean checkoff-funded genome research also positioned soy to be chosen by the U.S. Department of Energy's Joint Genome Institute as the next plant genome to be sequenced, a project valued at $11 million.

The federal law that created the soybean checkoff requires that U.S. soybean farmers have an opportunity every five years to request a referendum on continuation of the program. In 1999, less than 3 percent of eligible soybean producers requested a referendum on the soybean checkoff. In 2004, less than half of 1 percent of all eligible soybean producers requested a referendum. USB conducted its first statistically valid, biannual soybean farmer attitudes survey in 1997. At that time, 65 percent of soybean farmers surveyed indicated they supported the soybean checkoff. The most recent survey conducted earlier this year showed 73 percent of U.S. soybean farmers support the soybean checkoff.

7. And even though it is not directly related to the role of the United Soybean Board, what, if any, role has it played in the broader soybean or agricultural industry that members of Congress should know about?

The 64 farmer-directors who serve voluntarily on USB believe it's also our responsibility to help lead the U.S. soybean industry. Since 2002, USB has brought together state and national soybean checkoff and association leaders and staff for CONNECTIONS, a joint planning meeting to help establish our research and promotion priorities and strategies for the following three to five years. Last year, USB took the process a step further by engaging all players in the U.S. soybean value chain to actively take part in Soy 2020. This U.S. soybean industry-wide effort created a vision for the future of U.S. soybeans for the next twelve years. It focuses on four key stages: a comprehensive environmental scan that identified key areas of emphasis; analysis of different possible scenarios for the U.S. soybean industry; development of the vision and strategies to support each scenario; and a formal launch, which took place earlier this year.

Aside from this formal joint planning meeting, the farmer-directors of USB have also committed to a leading cause in U.S. agriculture—supporting the livestock and poultry industries. The animal agriculture industry is inherently important to the soybean industry, as it is our number one customer, consuming nearly all of the domestically used soybean meal. The USB-led Animal Agriculture Initiative is an effort to build support among soybean farmers and leading agriculture organizations, including the American Farm Bureau Federation, the Animal Agriculture Alliance, and other checkoff organizations such as the National Pork Board. This combined, concentrated support will not only help protect the domestic livestock and poultry industries from unnecessary criticism and ridicule, but will also help protect our number one market for soybean meal.

I am confident this information will help you and other members of Congress understand how our self-help research and promotion program has created new U.S. soybean demand and profit opportunities for all U.S. soybean farmers. Please let me know if we can provide any additional information for you and your colleagues.

The 64 volunteer soybean farmer-leaders who make up our board truly believe we have an effective, efficient and farmer-driven soybean checkoff.

Respectfully yours,

ERIC NIEMANN,
Chairman, United Soybean Board (USB).

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. SUE WILKINS MYRICK

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 6, 2007

Mrs. MYRICK. Madam Speaker, I was unable to participate in the following votes. If I had been present, I would have voted as follows:

June 5, 2007:

Rollcall vote 426, on motion to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution H. Res. 397—Condemning violence in Estonia and attacks on Estonia's embassies in 2007, and expressing solidarity with the Government and the people of Estonia, I would have voted ''aye.''

Rollcall vote 427, on motion to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution H. Res. 422—Calling on the Government of the People's Republic of China to use its unique influence and economic leverage to stop genocide and violence in Darfur, Sudan, I would have voted ''aye.''

Rollcall vote 428, on motion to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution H. Res. 430—Calling on the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to immediately release Dr. Haleh Esfandiari, I would have voted ''aye.''

Rollcall vote 429, on motion to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution H. Res. 451—Directing the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct to respond to the indictment of, or the filing of charges of criminal conduct in a court of the United States or any State against, any Member of the House of Representatives by empaneling an investigative subcommittee to review the allegations, I would have voted ''aye.''

Rollcall vote 430, on motion to suspend the rules and agree to the Resolution H. Res. 452—Raising a Question of the Privileges of the House, I would have voted ''aye.''

CONGRATULATIONS, AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY OF SIKESTON, MISSOURI

HON. JO ANN EMERSON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 6, 2007

Mrs. EMERSON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to offer my most sincere congratulations to the American Legion Auxiliary of Sikeston, Missouri, which this year celebrates its 80th anniversary. Every year in the eight decades of the American Legion's existence in Sikeston, this group of patriotic Americans annually makes multiple investments of time, talent and treasure in our southern Missouri community.